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Epictetus

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Niko Huttunen: *Epictetus* in **T&T Clark Encyclopedia of Second Temple Judaism** (eds Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Daniel M. Gurtner). T&T Clark, 2019.

Epictetus (ca. 50 CE – ca. 130 CE) is one of the prominent late Stoics. He was born to a slave mother in Hierapolis, Asia Minor. Later he sojourned in Rome as a slave of a certain Epaphroditus, who is sometimes identified with Nero's freedman and secretary, and with the Epaphroditus to whom Josephus dedicates his books (*Vita* 430; *Ap.* 296). However, these identifications are doubtful (Weaver).

In Rome, Epictetus studied philosophy under the Stoic Musonius Rufus. After gaining his personal freedom, Epictetus began his own teaching. Emperor Domitian banished him from Rome along with other philosophers, and Epictetus founded a school in Nicopolis, close to the modern Preveza in Greece, where he died. According to Josephus (*Ant.* 16.5.3), the greatest part of the city's public edifices were built by Herod the Great.

Epictetus delivered his teaching orally in the form of *diatribe*, closely reminiscent of Paul's epistles. His *Discourses* and *Encheiridion* are written by his student, Lucius Flavius Arrian (ca. 95–170), in the early 2nd century. The texts represent the late Stoicism providing a reference point to comparisons for the contemporary philosophically oriented Jewish and Christian texts (Long; Bonhöffer; Huttunen 2009).

Epictetus mentions Jews two times along with Syrians, Egyptians, and Romans. In *Disc.* 1.11.12–13, referring to their differing views on food (τροφή), Epictetus illustrates the general rule that conflicting views cannot be right at the same time. In *Disc.* 1.22.4 Epictetus mentions that all the four nations are unanimous that holiness should be valued highly. Yet, there is a conflict (μάχη) on whether it is holy or unholy to eat pork. In both cases, the passing references to dietary regulations indicate that the audience has general knowledge on the issue, which the Sceptics used to deny the Stoic theory of the common notions (Dobbin).

Epictetus' two other texts are variously interpreted both as a reference to the Jews and to the Christians. In *Disc.* 4.7.6, Epictetus mentions fearless Galileans, whom some scholars have associated with the Zealots. This is doubtful, as the passing reference would not be understandable for the audience outside Palestine and many decades after the Jewish War. Most scholars assume that the Galileans denote the Christians.

In *Disc.* 2.9.19–21 Epictetus admonishes the audience to become real Stoics in comparing them with Jews, who have assumed “the *pathos* of the baptized.” Due to the textual complexities, the editions provide the text in an emended form, which seems to speak of proselyte baptism. Circumcision, however, is not mentioned, which makes the interpretation doubtful.

In the original text of *Disc.* 2.9.19–21, Jews become real (τῷ ὄντι) Jews so that baptism cannot denote proselyte baptism. The perfect tense (βεβαμμένον), however, suggests one-time baptism in contrast to repeated ablutions. The words of the baptized real Jews are probably dependent on Christian supersessionism: the Christian baptism makes a real Jew. Thus, the text provides evidence of the Jewish-Christian relationships in the beginning of the 2nd century (Huttunen 2013).

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